



TALE OF TALES

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Hi I'm Auriea.

I am co-founder of Tale of Tales an independent game studio in Gent, Belgium
for the last 10 years of my life I've made videogames.

#1REASONTOBE



INVOCATION

When asked to make a talk for #1ReasonToBe I discovered a labyrinth of thoughts.

I feel this question of diversity in games is such a simple one, actually. Over the years I never recognised any problems I have had in the games industry that could be summed up as a problem of gender or of race or class or culture. It has been mix of all these things..... A LACK of all these things has impoverished gaming. But on the bright side like so many things the solution lies inside the problem.

In the myth, Ariadne is the one who gives Theseus a ball of thread to escape the Minotaur's maze. So let it be with you and with me and this talk.

METAPHOR

you all know what a metaphor is, right? okay... lets continue...

NASCONDINO



Hello

I'm Auriea Harvey and this talk is called Nascondino



Some of my favorite stuff in the world is the art of the Renaissance. I have spent countless hours studying it, travelling to see my most loved paintings, frescos, architecture and sculptures. I've educated myself about the symbols in these artworks and the cultural circumstance in which things were created, bought and sold.

A Renaissance studio did not operate all that differently from a video game studio. Often many artisans would work on one painting. But only the lead artist, the one with the name would get the credit.

This painting may or may not have been different in that respect but we know it was made by an exceptional woman, Artemisa Gentelleschi. One of the few woman that we know lead her own studio in the Renaissance.

An essay on the Metropolitan Museum of Art website describes the painting thus....

Each time I stand before this painting I am impressed by the clever way the artist—the most famous female painter of the seventeenth century—has infused a well-known biblical story with her understanding of a gendered society in which women employed beauty and cleverness to gain the upper hand. On the left, there is the sumptuously dressed Esther, shown in a swoon, supported by her two maidservants. On the right, the almost comically dandyish king of the Persians. Just look at his extended leg, showing off a white silk stocking and high-stepping boots!

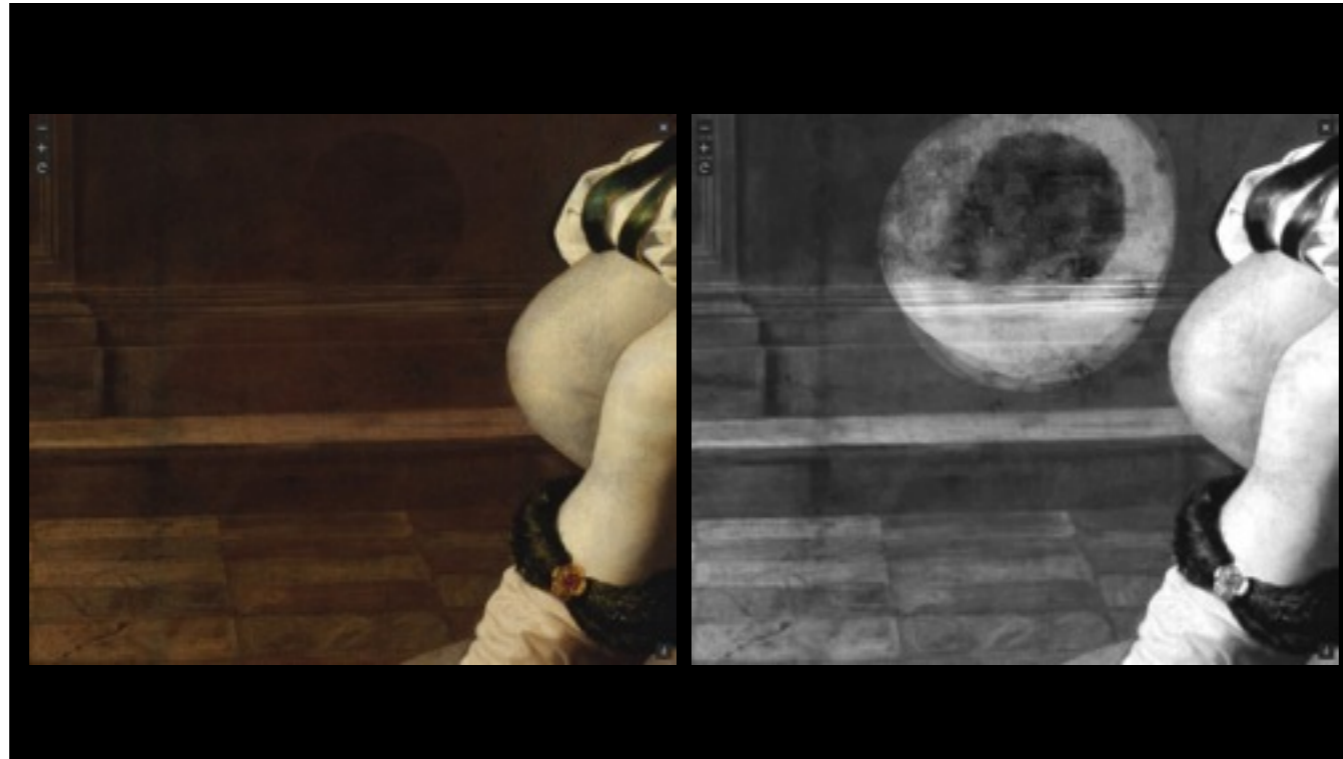


And then there is the empty space between the two...if you look closely at this painting in the galleries you'll see that she painted the checkerboard pavement over a young black servant restraining a growling dog. I guess in the end she found it a distraction: too arresting a detail to be put dead center. And she needed that space—a moment of silence, during which we hold our breath—to underscore the great risk Esther had taken by appearing before the king without being summoned—an infraction punishable by death.

And that is videogames!

with one important difference though...

Its funny to be so in love with an artform when you know if you had been alive at that time you wouldn't have been allowed to participate in it. even if, by the strength of my romantic notions, i feel i'm born 500 years too late. i would never want to go back there and live in that time. its just not a fantasy i can seriously indulge in.



So this, where do i start with this? This space -in between- where the presence of another part of me is missing, faded. This faded character is everything i feel about everything i've ever done.

in-between... one would think.... ah yeah:

- being represented but not the one doing that representation!
- being immersed in cultures other than my own!

maybe...

i usually refuse to be a part of anything where i am asked because i am a woman

or because i am black.

i just dont think like that.

i can try to describe this in-between from where i stand...



I left the United States in 1999 to come live in Europe.

This is Europe.

There is a lot going on. People in paradise, people in pain.

Americans think of Europe as an exotic travel destination, or that place where our ancestors came from or something.

That is one aspect yes,... But I also see this...



How or why the black people are there is not important, what's significant to me is that THEY ARE.

being a game designer in games culture

i feel a lot like the black people in these paintings,

insinuating themselves into places people wouldn't expect. alternately odd and accepted.

sometimes peeking out

sometimes the center of attention

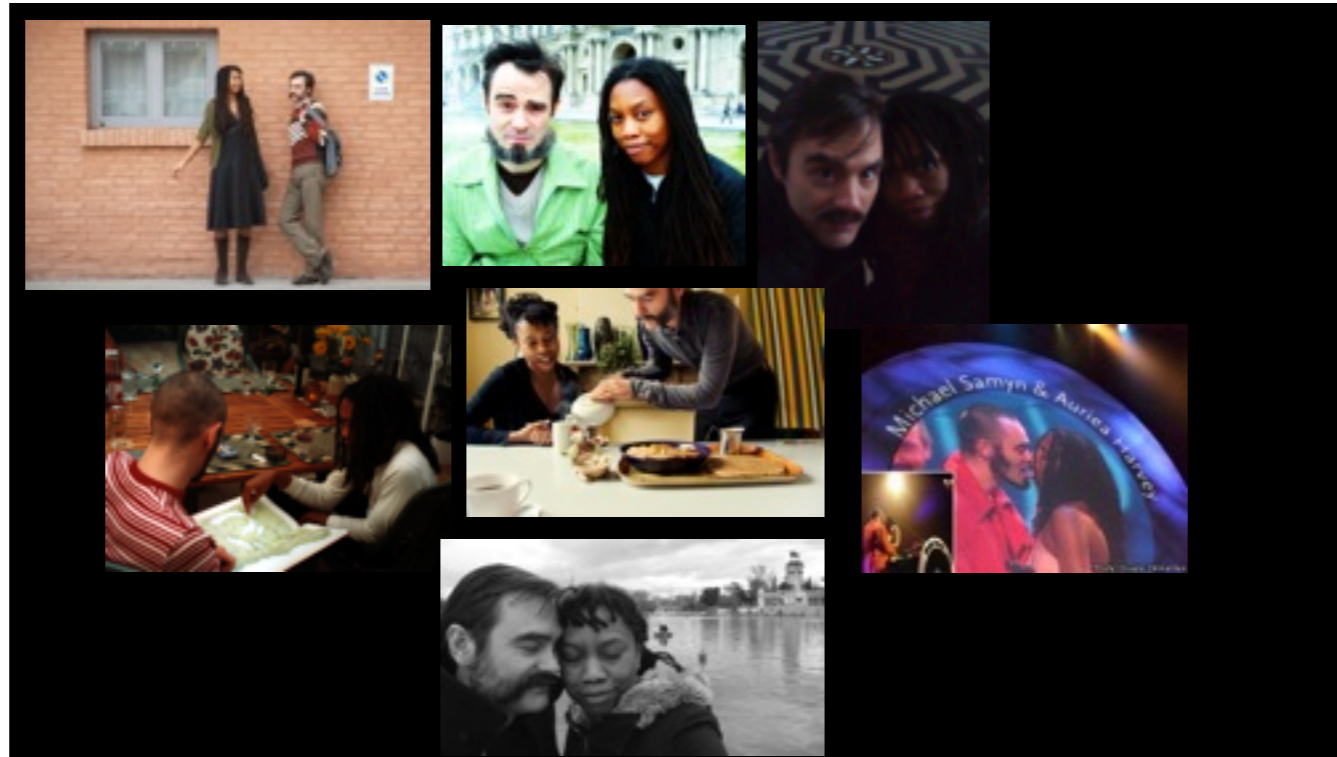
often with a cherry on my head.

VERSTOPPERTJE



Goeienamiddag

Mijn naam is Auriea Harvey
en mijn presentatie noem ik Verstoppertje



If anything being invited to talk about being a woman making games pisses me off because it means you people are splitting up me from the one i love.

Michael and I make all Tale of Tales games together.

i have to speak a language

i speak english

i speak dutch

i force michael to speak a language that is not his own.

michael forces me to speak a language that is not my own.

i enjoy cultures that are not my own and that i will perhaps never understand

i don't pretend that i will ever understand.

i create games about this misunderstanding.

we've made 8 games together



Those games are pretty much thought of as “weird”

And we have always wondered why

thinking about it, it is my thoughts, our thoughts that have been discriminated against more than anything else.

is that what has always made me hide?

Even as I proudly pose for a character or work with a dancer to become Salome

For years I strongly believed this:

I didn't think women and minorities weren't shown as game characters because they were hard to animate but because game designers completely lacked imagination.

African writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie once said:

“We do a great disservice to boys in how we raise them, We stifle the humanity of boys. We define masculinity in a very narrow way. Masculinity is a hard, small cage, and we put boys inside this cage.”

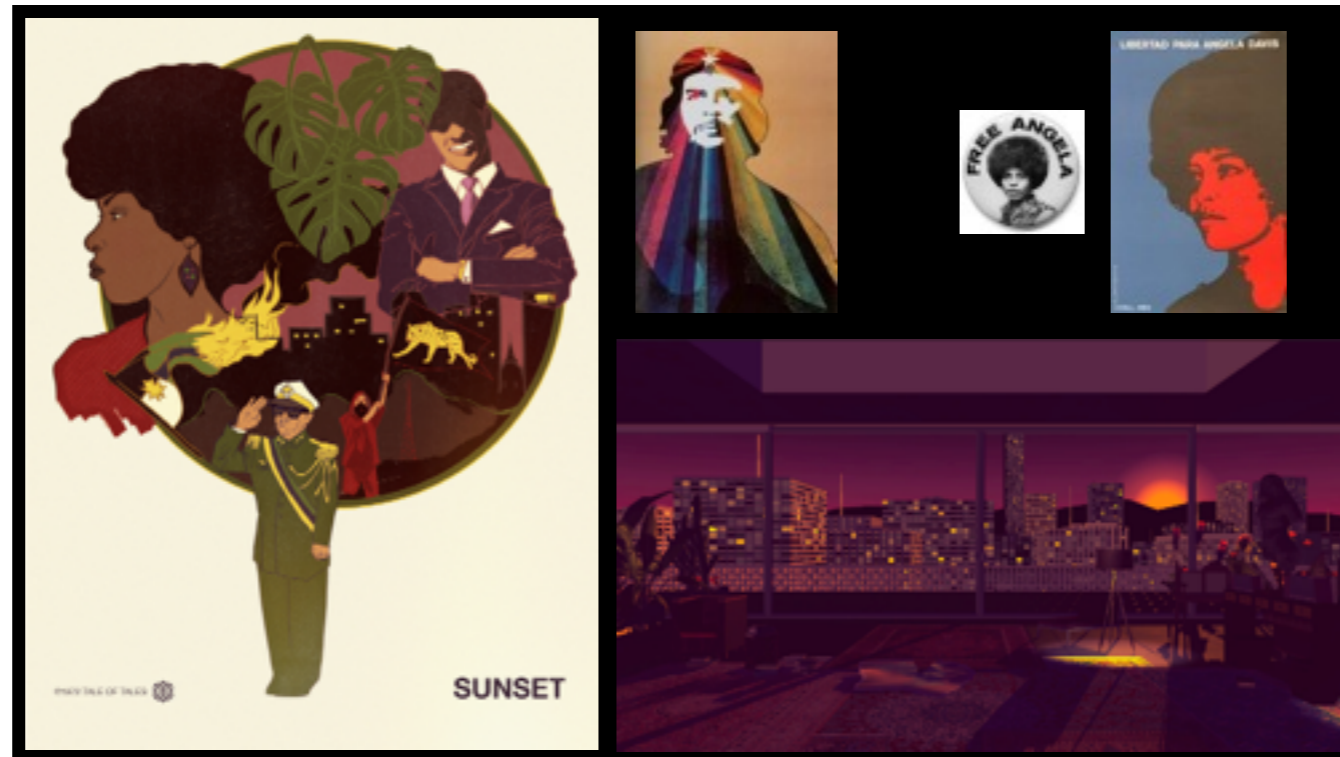
I agree.

For a long time people approached our games like we are trying to take their toys away from them

When actually all we advocate is more femininity in games! More femininity in game not necessarily more women. I'd like game designers to see femininity as a way of escaping the cage, of broadening their creative palette.

And not 'diversity', whatever this means, But an invitation to people to embrace this medium as their own.

To create out of their experience, thinking outside the cage of what a game is, And gaining diversity as an almost unasked for bonus.



I say create out of your experience, all the time,
but then of course

Our next game
SUNSET

The raw material is both things I know and
things I know nothing at all about.

A first-person camera puts you in the body of a black woman who has immigrated to a Latin American country and becomes embroiled in a narrative about war and social upheaval and yes, explosions.

We've invented a country

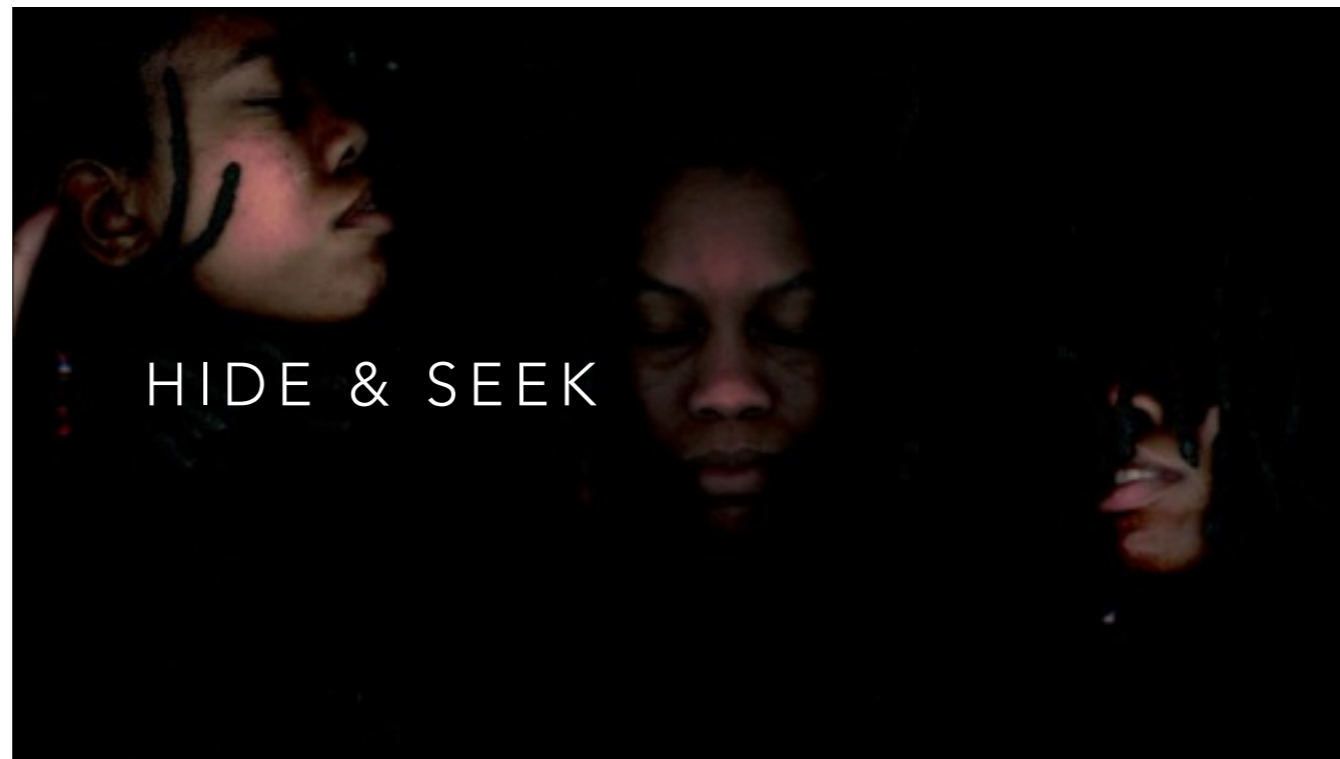
we've invented a city

(and while it is common to make things up in videogames)

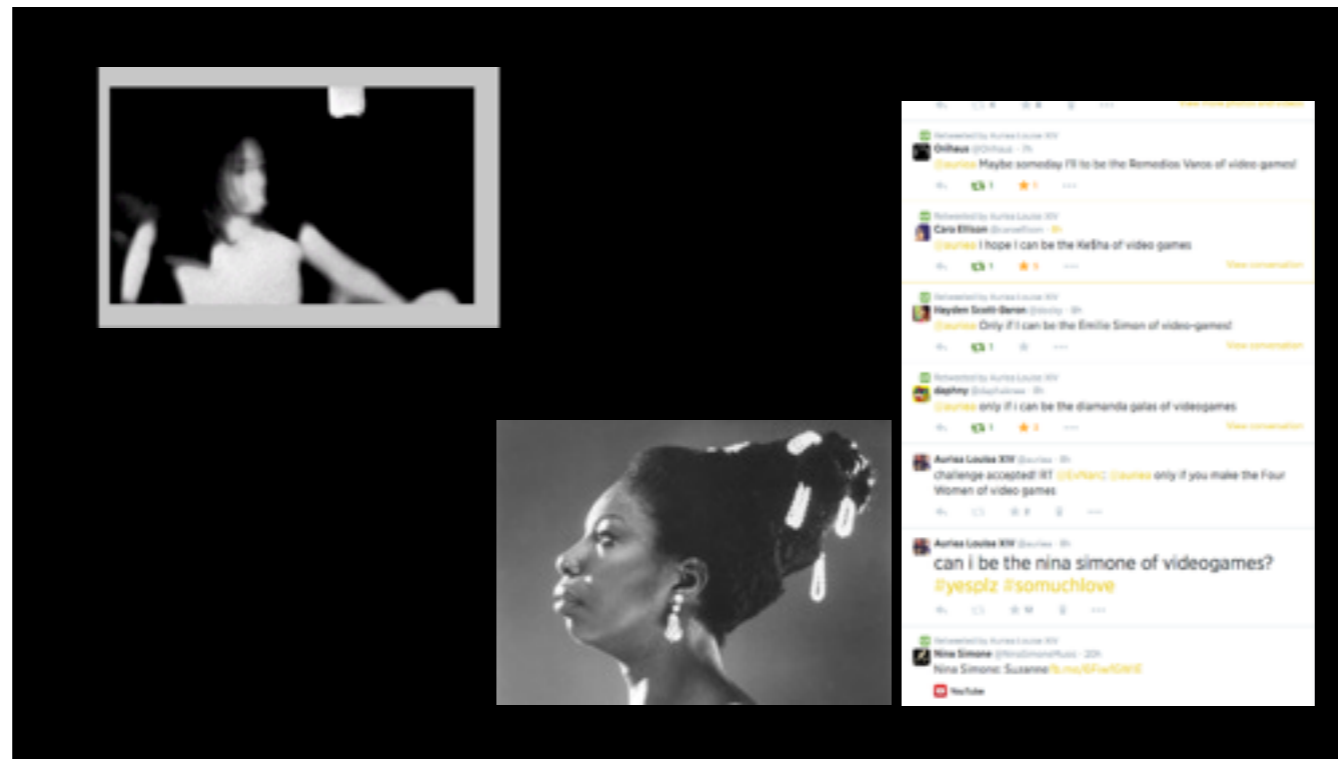
we don't give you dragons but maybe a mirror held up to the world you know

as war goes on all around us right now.

A videogame can be a tool.



Hello,
I'm Auriea Harvey and this talk is called Hide & Seek



“How I got started in games is not important, I’m here now.”

this is an exchange i had on twitter the other day

when i silently, out loud wished i could be the Nina Simone of games

as you can see from the parallel wishes of other game developers on my list. we could have a vibrant and deeply weird diversity of videogames if people had their way. what we need is to make sure the Remedios Varos and Ke\$ha of videogames feel welcome. And can sustain their practice.

That Auriea up there working at her computer in 1999 was not afraid

Never afraid of being “different”

Not afraid or bitter about being “the only one”

because “belonging” is overrated.

people seem to want things to fit

to fit into these neat packages of belonging and not belonging

but in fact nothing fits

nothing at all

Many people talk of playing videogames at young age being formative...



I don't remember much about the videogames I played as a child but I do remember this.

the joy of finishing Scott Adams voodoo castle

running through the house excitedly telling my family "I finished it I finished it"

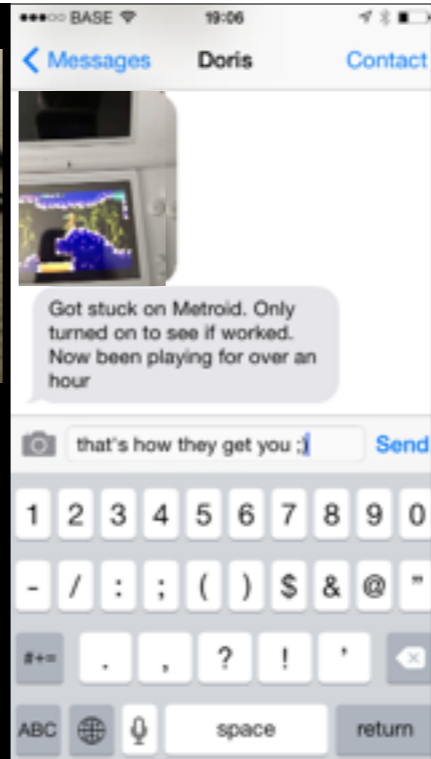
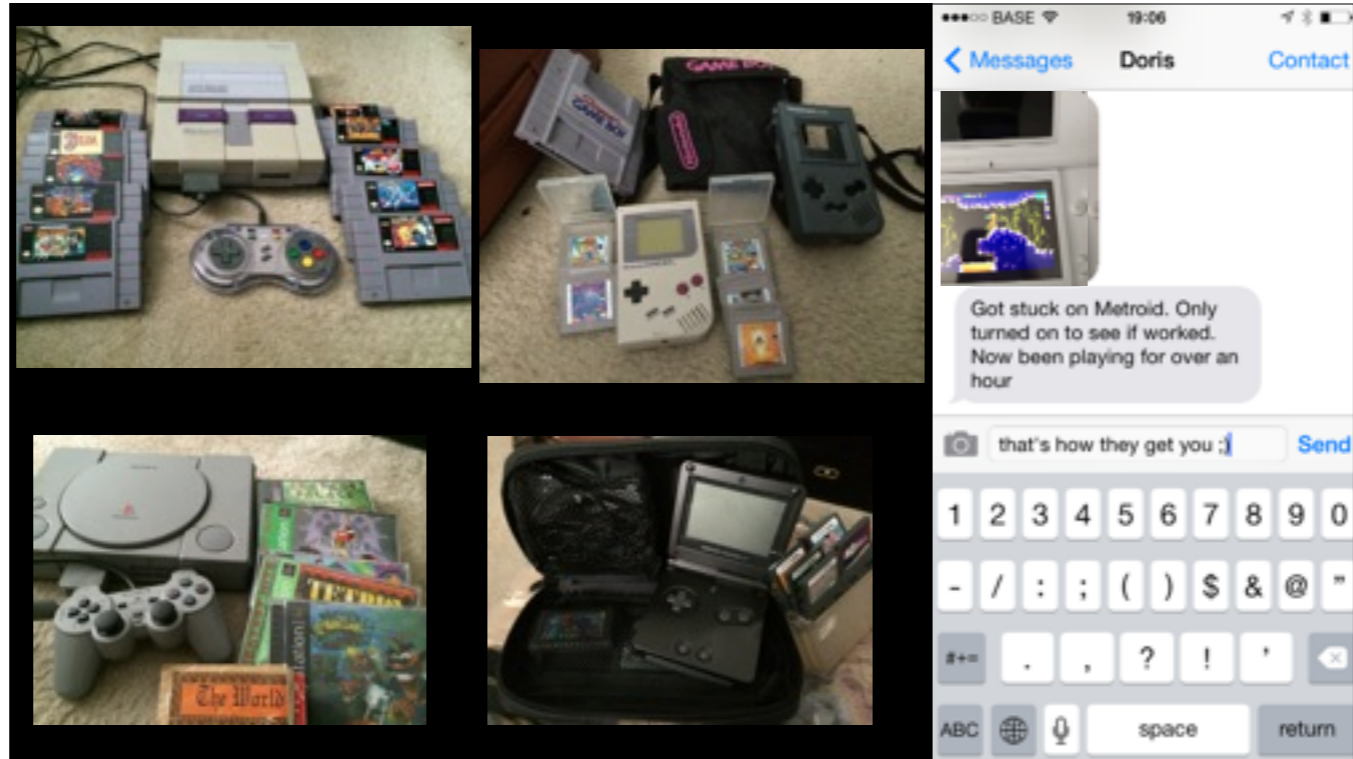
and programming in BASIC on my Vic 20

a computer my mother gave me because "Computers are the future"

I remembered we had an NES

And my mom never throws ANYTHING away

so the other day i asked her to send me a picture of it for this talk.



She sent me not only that but photos of all the games we played back then, a pic of her Gameboys (she had ostensibly bought for her grandchildren.) Her Playstation 1 and her game boy advance SP and then proceeded to get embroiled in a game of Metroid on her DS.

yep, thats how they get you ;)



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